

East Gary Library

Orpha Maud Peters book on The Gary Public Library, 1907-1944

includes this paragraph on the East Gary Library.

"As a part of extension service in Hobart township, a station was founded in East Gary in 1914. Books for children were placed in the school, and a small collection for adults was placed in the post office. Later the post office became quarters for a regular branch, with the postmistress, Mrs. Jay Lewis, in charge. In 1918 Miss Helen Patterson became librarian, retaining the post for twenty-four years, retiring December 1, 1942. The present librarian is Mrs. Bessie Marks."

Librarians--

1914-18	Mrs. Jay Lewis
1918-42	Miss Helen Patterson
1942-48	Mrs. Bessie Marks
1948-51	Mrs. Katherine Smith
1951-to date	Mrs. Lillian Sykes

Locations

1914-42	Post office
1943-50	Central & Parke
1951	3125 Fairview
1952 to date	3612 Central

The work of the Federated Women's Club in locating and decorating the quarters at 3125 Fairview was of great importance in renewing interest in the library. It's theme-- "Help the Library." (see enclosed sheet)

The total collection at the end of 1953 is 2998. With the inclusion of Hobart Township in the Lake County Library, increased services and materials can be expected.

As a small library associated with the Gary Public Library, E. Gary has had many more materials available than it would appear at a glance. Regular weekly deliveries to the branch and schools, as well as trailer service to outlying schools are all a part of the service.

Regular story Hour programs for pre-school youngsters have been in process since 1951. Attendance averages 23. Mrs. Karl Wurster was the story teller until she moved from the city. Mrs. Sykes, local librarian, now continues the program.



When a community wants to do something about a rundown library branch, a little effort by a civic group can accomplish a great deal.

This was proved recently at the East Gary branch of the Gary Public Library.

No one was very happy about the condition of the branch--neither the officials and staff of the library nor the citizens of the East Gary community.

The branch was being invaded by rats to the point where books were being severely damaged. Library officials had looked for improved quarters from time to time with no success.

Then one day some women representing the East Gary Federated Women's Club descended on the Gary librarian. He expected a repetition of the complaints he had been receiving.

Instead they told him they wanted to help improve the inadequate library facilities in their area. They had voted, "Help the Library" as their civic project for the year.

Leaders of the group were: Mrs. J. W. Mather, president; Mrs. John Klempa, Mrs. Ivan Meister and Mrs. Walter Koontz, members of the planning group.

Within two months they found a new location in a building which was adequate besides being neat and clean.

The room, 12' x 30', has three large picture windows, two of the windows together. Lighting is furnished from four fluorescent fixtures, and the room



is heated by an oil stove.

When the new building was found two Central Library janitors took apart the shelving at the old branch and from it built shelving to fit the dimensions of the new building. Oversize shelving was placed below the windows so that the top of the shelving was flush with the sills. This space is excellent for display purposes.

At this point members of the Women's Club rolled up their sleeves, took paint brushes in hand, and painted the room a pleasant shade of light green. They made colorful drapes of a deep red with a black and white abstract design.

A philodendron plant helps make the large picture window more attractive. The women painted the floor a rich mahogany and the room began to take on a very cozy atmosphere.

Approximately 200 new books with plasti-kleer covers were sent from the Extension Department of the Central Library. These books were placed on the shelves and book cases and gave added color and interest to the new library. Mrs. Katherine Smith, the branch librarian, arranged attractive displays of books throughout the room. One display on home furnishing received much attention.

All of the publicity for the opening was handled by the Women's Club. This included articles in the three local newspapers, invitations to the school to send classes for a visit, and personal contacts with people in the community by the members.

The hours of the library were increased to include an additional six hours per week. Information about the library hours was mimeographed on



small white cards and given to all of the visitors at the opening. These cards, small enough to be tucked into a wallet or purse, can be referred to easily when needed.

Opening day was a gala event with tea and cakes served by the Women's Club. Classes from the nearby school visited the branch and were entertained with stories told by Mrs. Karl Wurster, a local woman, who has since offered to conduct a story hour every Saturday afternoon at the branch. Mrs. Smith, the librarian, reports that attendance and circulation have been booming since the new location opened and many new borrowers are coming to the library.

This is how one small community and a civic minded group tackled a problem and solved it for the present. And the citizens of East Gary aren't finished. They won't be content until they have a building of their own to replace the rented quarters now being used.

#365 - rooming  
house

Emily Wilcox  
26 year old  
woman

from 1860

Census

Public Station

4 schools in  
township.